SOPHISTICATED SUSPENSE
35p
FEB 85
SWAMP THING
WHERE LEGENDS LIVE!

"MRS. CABLE?

"MRS. CABLE... THE APARTMENT IS YOURS, BUT I HAVE TO ASK A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS. IT SAYS HERE THAT YOU'RE MARRIED. WILL MR. CABLE BE LIVING HERE...?

"LIVING HERE...?

"LIVING HERE..?

"I'LL BE HONEST WITH YOU, MRS. CABLE... YOUR HUSBAND IS IN A DEEP COMA, AND THERE IS EVERY INDICATION THAT HE'S LIKELY TO STAY THAT WAY...

"STAY THAT WAY...

"STAY THAT WAY...

"ABBY... WE'RE ALL VERY SATISFIED WITH YOUR WORK HERE AT ELYSIUM LAWNS, BUT I WONDERED IF THINGS WERE OKAY WITH YOU PERSONALLY?

"I WANT TO HELP, ABBY, BUT WITH YOU IT'S ALL SECRETS AND MYSTERIES...

"SECRETS AND MYSTERIES

"SECRETS AND MYSTERIES

"SECRETS AND MYSTERIES"

ABANDONED HOUSES

ALAN MOORE WRITER

RON RANDALL ARTIST

COSTUMES KAREN BERGER EDITOR

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P-PRETTY SCARY PLACES, AREN'T THEY?

THEY STILL MAKE *ME* NERVOUS... AND I *LIVE* HERE.

WHAT *I* SAY IS, IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE *COLD*, KEEP OUT OF THE *MORTUARY*!

WHO ARE YOU?

AM I *DREAMING* THIS?

WELL, NOT EXACTLY... W-WE 'RE A PROJECTION OF THE *HUMAN COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUS*, EXISTING AS A CONSTRUCT OF THE BRAIN'S RIGHT HEMISPHERE, AND..

IGNORE MY BROTHER. HE HAS NO SENSE OF *MYSTERY*.

YES. YOU'RE DREAMING THIS.

BUT...BUT... ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO *KNOW* THAT I'm DREAMING THIS? PEOPLE IN DREAMS DON'T USUALLY...

BAHAMA CYL. THEY *PRETEND* NOT TO KNOW TO AVOID *EMBARRASSING* YOU!

NOW HURRY UP AND *CHOOSE*!

CHOOSE?

YES... YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS HAS *DIRECTED* YOU HERE TO LEARN SOMETHING *IMPORTANT*, YOU SEE, AND...

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A *MYSTERY*, OR A *SECRET*?

I...I DON'T *KNOW*. IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

OF *COURSE* THERE'S A DIFFERENCE! *MYSTERIES* ARE WONDERS THAT YOU CAN PONDER AND SHARE. *SECRETS* ARE A BURDEN TO CARRY *ALONE*!

CHOOSE...

...BETWEEN MY *HOUSE OF MYSTERY*...

...AND MY BROTHER'S *HOUSE OF SECRETS*!

WELL... IF IT'S ALL THE SAME TO YOU, I THINK I'D PREFER A GUIDED TOUR FROM YOUR BROTHER. NOTHING PERSONAL.

YOUR LOSS, MY DEAR.

I-IS THAT ALL RIGHT? I MEAN, YOU WON'T BE ANGRY, WILL YOU? IF YOU'RE SURE THAT YOU DON'T MIND ME ESCORTING HER...

MIND? WHY SHOULD I MIND?

AM I YOUR KEEPER?

YOUR BROTHER SEEMS PRETTY ABRASIVE. DOESN'T HE GET ON YOUR NERVES?

WELL, HE'S NOT SO BAD. HE JUST GETS JEALOUS WHEN PEOPLE LIKE ME BETTER THAN HIM, I SUPPOSE.

BUT YOU'RE RIGHT...

SOMETIMES HE CAN BE MURDER.

THROUGH HERE.

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

IT'S VERY STRANGE AND CLUTTERED..

YES, YOU'RE RIGHT... THIS IS THE PART OF THE UNCONSCIOUS WHERE ALL THE STORIES ARE BORN AND KEPT.

THERE ARE TOO MANY TO KEEP TIDY, ALTHOUGH GOD KNOWS I TRY...

OVER THERE'S A STORY ABOUT AN OLD WOMAN WHO KEPT THE OCEAN IN A BOTTLE.

DOWN HERE'S THE TALE OF AN ORCHARD THAT BORE SKULLS INSTEAD OF FRUIT. ALL TRUE, YOU KNOW...

THIS WAY...

LISTEN, ARE YOU SURE I'M GOING TO LEARN SOMETHING IMPORTANT FROM ALL THIS...?

OH, YES! MOST CERTAINLY! I'VE GOT A VERY SPECIAL SECRET BACK HERE SOMEPLACE THAT'S JUST FOR YOU!

NOW, WHERE DID I...

AHH! HERE IT IS!

THERE'S A LOT OF DUST...

AHHM. WELL, THINGS HAVE BEEN QUIET AROUND HERE THESE LAST FEW YEARS. PEOPLE DON'T DROP BY SO MUCH. I THINK THAT'S WHAT ANNOYS MY BROTHER. BEING NEGLECTED..

DOWN HERE...

A BRACELET?

BRACELET?

OH, NO! NO, IT JUST LOOKS LIKE A BRACELET. IT'S REALLY A STORY. A SPECIAL CIRCULAR STORY THAT GOES ROUND AND ROUND...

BUT WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH ME?

AHHH! NOW, THAT'S THE SECRET!

YOU'RE NOT AN ORDINARY WOMAN, YOU KNOW. SOME STRANGE STORIES HAVE INTRUDED UPON YOUR LIFE LATELY...

STORIES? EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED TO ME HAS BEEN REAL...

OH, PLEASE, IT WAS JUST A FIGURE OF SPEECH. DON'T TAKE OFFENSE. YOU SEE, IN A WAY, EVERYTHING IS MADE OF STORIES.

HERE... DO SIT DOWN...

YOU SEE, WHAT I'M GETTING AT IS, THESE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU...

...THEY'VE ALL HAPPENED BEFORE, IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES!

IT'S LIKE A CIRCLE. IT GOES ROUND AND ROUND AND ROUND...

I'M SORRY, BUT THIS SOUNDS LOONY. I BETTER GO...

OH, NO! PLEASE! YOU MUST LISTEN TO THE STORY...

IT'S ONE OF MY FAVORITES.

IT STARTS LIKE THIS...

"I CANNOT REMEMBER THE MORNINGS ANYMORE..."

I CANNOT REMEMBER THE MORNING ANYMORE -- BUT I KNOW THE EVENING WELL! I BELONG TO IT NOW -- AND IT CARES FOR ME IN RETURN -- SHELTERING ME -- NURTURING ME, HOLDING ME CLOSE WITHIN ITS VELVET EMBRACE...

THE MOON IS RISING NOW, CLAWING ITS WAY INTO THE SKY -- A GLOWING, AMBER EYE THAT CASTS ITS DISDAINFUL GAZE ON THE MURKY OOZE BELOW -- THE SWAMP THAT IS MY HOME...

I MOVE SLOWLY THROUGH THE MOSS-DRAPED MIRE -- TREADING A PATH THAT IS WORN SMOOTH FROM MY CONSTANT PASSING -- ON BEYOND THE SHADOWS AND THE DARK TREES' TWISTING TENDRILS TO MY INEVITABLE DESTINATION...

THE EDGE OF THE SWAMP -- AND THE MIST-WET OLD MANSION THAT RISES LIKE AN AGING APPARITION INTO A COLD EXPANSE OF SKY -- A STATELY SANCTUARY FULL OF BRIGHT LIGHTS AND PROMISES -- AND MEMORIES THAT BRING ONLY PAIN...

SWAMP THING

STORY: LEN WEIN
ART: BERNI WRIGHTSON

I HAVE STOOD WATCHING THAT OLD GRAY EDIFICE FOR MORE LONELY NIGHTS THAN I WANT TO RECALL -- DREAMING ENDLESSLY OF THE SOFT GOLDEN LADY WHO LIVES WITHIN -- KNOWING I CAN NEVER HAVE HER -- WONDERING WHAT SHE'S DOING *NOW*...

YOU SMILE BECAUSE HE EXPECTS YOU TO -- BUT IN THE SHADOWED CORRIDORS OF YOUR HEART THERE IS NO *REAL* JOY -- THERE *NEVER* CAN BE...

A TOAST, MY DARLING -- TO *US!* TODAY IS *SIX MONTHS* SINCE WE WERE *WED!*

YOUR NAME IS *LINDA OLSEN RIDGE* -- AND YOUR MIND IS A RAGING RIVER THIS NIGHT -- CARRYING YOUR THOUGHTS ALONG A SURGING STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS -- SENDING *MEMORIES* CRASHING LIKE WAVES UPON SOME DISTANT SHORE...

YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT *ALEX* AGAIN, *AREN'T* YOU, DARLING? I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR *EYES!*

I'M *SORRY,* DAMIAN -- IT'S JUST THAT HE'S STILL SO *REAL* TO ME!

LINDA, ALEX OLSEN IS *DEAD* -- AND YOU ARE *MY* WIFE NOW! EVENTUALLY, YOU WILL HAVE TO *REALIZE* THAT FACT! ALEX IS *GONE,* DARLING -- THERE IS *NOTHING* TO DO BUT *FORGET* HIM!

NEVER -- FOR TO FORGET ALEX OLSEN IS TO DENY A PART OF YOURSELF -- A *GOOD* PART -- FILLED WITH HAPPY SUMMER DAYS AND STAR-DAPPLED NIGHTS MIST COVERS YOUR EYES -- AND MEMORIES FALL WITH THE TEARS...

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS RIBBONS... CANDLES... A PARTY! YOU HAVE BEEN ALEX'S WIFE FOR TWELVE SHORT MONTHS... IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY...

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO MY TWO DEAREST FRIENDS! I REALLY ENVY YOU, ALEX! YOU GOT YOURSELF QUITE A PRIZE IN LINDA!

AND DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW IT!

AN ANNIVERSARY GIFT, DARLING -- FOR YOU! A SYMBOL OF MY FEELING FOR YOU!

A GOLDEN BRACELET! LINDA, I... I'LL NEVER TAKE IT OFF AS LONG AS I LIVE! I PROMISE YOU THAT!

WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS THE FEELING OF PRIDE YOU HAVE BEING MARRIED TO A FAST-RISING YOUNG SCIENTIST WITH THE WORLD AT HIS DOORSTEP...

WE MAKE A FINE TEAM, DAMIAN-- I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'D BE WITHOUT YOUR HELP!

IF THIS PROJECT SUCCEEDS, ALEX-- THAT WILL BE ALL THE THANKS I NEED!

WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS THE SEARING SOUND OF DEVASTATION-- AS YOU WATCH YOUR WORLD GO UP IN FLAMES BEFORE YOU...

OH, DEAR GOD--NO! ALEX'S LAB...

WARAROOOM!

WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS THE GAPING WOUND THAT ONCE HAD BEEN YOUR HEART--WHEN YOU LEARN YOU ARE ALONE...

DON'T GO IN THERE! THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO SEE, LINDA! ALEX IS DEAD!

OH, DAMIAN, NO... NO... NO... NO... NO...

WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS A FLEETING FANTASY FAR TOO PAINFUL TO LONG REMAIN--THAT CARRIES YOU BACK THROUGH THE PORTAL OF THE PAST TO THE HARSH REALITY OF NOW...

LINDA, YOU HAVEN'T HEARD A WORD I'VE SAID!

I'M SORRY, DARLING--MY MIND WAS WANDERING--FORGIVE ME!

A HOLLOW RAIN HAS BEGUN TO FALL -- AS COLD AND EMPTY AS THE ACHING DEEP WITHIN ME -- I CAN BEAR IT NO LONGER -- THE GRIM, GRAY MANOR STANDS STARK AGAINST THE NIGHT, MOCKING ME -- I BEGIN TO MOVE...

THE NIGHT HAS GROWN COLDER NOW -- YOU CAN FEEL IT CROUCHED IN THE DARKNESS- WAITING FOR YOU...

IS SOMETHING WRONG, LINDA? YOU DON'T SEEM WELL!

ONLY THE CHILL NIGHT AIR, DARLING-- IT WILL PASS!

YOU LOOK INTO YOUR HUSBAND'S EYES--AND YOU SEE ONLY SHADOWS-- DARK, VEILED THINGS THAT WHISPER TO THE SURFACE--AND QUICKLY FADE AWAY--AND YOU WONDER WHAT IS GOING THROUGH HIS MIND...

DEAR, SWEET LINDA-- HOW TRULY LOVELY YOU REALLY ARE!

"I NEVER REALLY FORGAVE ALEX FOR MARRYING YOU WHEN HE KNEW HOW MUCH I LOVED YOU-- YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW HARD IT WAS FOR ME TO KEEP UP THE FACADE OF THE 'ETERNAL FRIEND'..."

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO MY TWO DEAREST FRIENDS!

©

"TO SEE YOU EVERY DAY--SO *CLOSE* AND YET SO IMPOSSIBLY *DISTANT*--NEVER TO KNOW YOUR TOUCH OR THE FRAGRANCE OF YOUR HAIR--IT WAS *MORE* THAN I COULD BEAR..."

"IT WAS *I* WHO ARRANGED THE EXPLOSION--ALONE AT NIGHT IN ALEX'S DARKENED LABORATORY--QUIETLY ALTERING THE VITAL COMPONENTS--TO RID MYSELF OF THE ONLY OBSTACLE IN MY WAY--MY *BEST* FRIEND..."

"YOU'LL NEVER KNOW THAT ALEX *WASN'T* KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION--THAT I CARRIED HIS BATTERED AND BLOODY FORM OUT INTO THE FETID INTERIOR OF THE SWAMP BEYOND--AND *BURIED* IT THERE..."

I WAS EVERY BIT THE *BEREAVED* FRIEND AT THE FUNERAL--ALWAYS THE COMFORTING SHOULDER--THE TENDER WORD--IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL YOU TURNED TO *ME* FOR COMFORT--OUR MARRIAGE WAS *INEVITABLE!*

FORGIVE ME, DARLING--BUT THE CHILL HAS GROWN *WORSE!* PERHAPS I OUGHT TO RETIRE TO MY ROOM!

OF COURSE, LINDA--HOW *THOUGHTLESS* OF ME! GO *AHEAD*... I'LL JOIN YOU SHORTLY!

YOU WALK QUIETLY DOWN THE CORRIDOR TO THE SHELTER OF YOUR ROOM-- AND YOU CAN FEEL DAMIAN'S GAZE FOLLOWING YOU-- SEARING TREMORS INTO THE SMALL OF YOUR BACK...

SHE CAN'T BEAR MY *TOUCH* ANYMORE-- THAT'S THE *FIRST* SIGN! ALL THE *LITTLE* SCRAPS OF INFORMATION SHE'S BEEN GATHERING ARE *COMING TOGETHER* AT LAST!

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHE REALIZES THAT *I* KILLED ALEX--AND *THAT* WILL MEAN MY *END!* HOWEVER MUCH I CARE FOR LINDA, MY *OWN* NECK COMES *FIRST*... *LINDA MUST DIE!*

THE CANDLES THAT LIGHT YOUR ROOM PROVIDE THE ONLY *REAL* WARMTH YOU'VE FELT THIS NIGHT--BUT EVEN THROUGH THAT MELLOW GLOW, THE CHILL RETURNS ONCE MORE...

DAMIAN IS HALF-WAY ACROSS THE HOUSE... *WHY* CAN'T I SHAKE THE FEELING THAT SOMEONE IS *WATCHING* ME?

MY HEART BEATS SOFTLY ONCE AGAIN--FOR THE SPARKLE IN HER EYES FILLS MY SOUL WITH A JOY I CANNOT DESERVE--LINDA-- HER NAME RINGS LIKE FINE CRYSTAL-- HER HAIR SHINES LIKE GOLD...

LINDA? ARE YOU FEELING *BETTER,* DARLING?

A *LITTLE* BETTER, I SUPPOSE, DAMIAN... BUT DON'T *WORRY* YOURSELF-- IT REALLY IS *NOTHING!*

NONSENSE! COME-- I'LL *MASSAGE* YOUR NECK--*THAT* SHOULD WORK OUT THE CHILL!

I WATCH DAMIAN RIDGE WALK SOFTLY ACROSS THE RUG AND SOMETHING GLITTERS IN HIS HAND-- *A HYPODERMIC NEEDLE!*

HE STANDS SILENTLY BEHIND HER, THE NEEDLE POISED TO STRIKE -- TO END THE LIFE OF THE ONLY THING IN THIS WORLD THAT MAKES MY EXISTENCE BEARABLE -- THE ONLY REASON I LIVE -- FURY FILLS THE SPACES BEHIND MY EYES -- AND I WALK INTO THE ROOM ...

OH, GOD- NO!

CRRASSHHHH!

WITH A SPEED I HAVE NEVER KNOWN BEFORE, I MOVE THE FETID BULK THAT IS MY BODY ACROSS THE SPAN OF FEET -- AND THE CLAW THAT IS MY HAND CLOSES UPON DAMIAN'S WRIST -- CRUSHING IT ...

GET AWAY-- GET AWAY FROM... ARRRGGHH!

SLOWLY -- CERTAINLY -- I FORCE THE LIFE FROM DAMIAN'S BLACK-HEARTED BODY -- A LIFE HE DOES NOT DESERVE ...

FOR SEVERAL SHORT MINUTES, DAMIAN RIDGE STRUGGLES FOR HIS UNWORTHY LIFE -- TEARING, CLAWING, RIPPING DECAYING SHREDS FROM WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN MY FLESH -- UNTIL, AT LAST, HE LIES STILL -- *FOREVER* ...

... AND MY BRIGHT, GOLDEN LADY STANDS SCREAMING BEHIND ME...

THE LOATHSOME MONSTROSITY TURNS FROM THE BODY OF YOUR HUSBAND AND REACHES FOR YOU WITH ARMS DRIPPING FILTH--FEAR WELLS UP WITHIN YOU LIKE A FLOOD--AND THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN SCREAMING RINGS IN YOUR EARS...

NO .. NO... STAY AWAY... EEEYyYAAAHH!

I STRETCH OUT MY ARMS TO HER--TO CALM HER--TO COMFORT HER--I OPEN MY MOUTH TO TELL HER HOW MUCH I CARE--BUT WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN MY VOCAL CORDS HAVE BEEN SILENT TOO LONG--I CANNOT MAKE A SOUND.

THE TORTURED, SHATTERED LOOK IN HER ONCE-SPARKLING EYES IS MORE THAN I CAN ENDURE -- I TURN MY FACE AWAY FROM HER--AND I START TO GO HOME...

ONLY THE SWAMP IS KIND TO ME NOW--IT IS ONLY THE SWAMP THAT CARES--I LOOK DOWN AT MY WRIST--AT THE BARREN PLACE WHERE ONCE THERE WAS A GOLDEN BRACELET --AND I WONDER WHERE IT IS...

--IF TEARS COULD COME -- THEY WOULD!

"...AND IF TEARS COULD COME, THEY WOULD."

THE END.

THERE... A SAD LITTLE STORY, ISN'T IT?

BUT... BUT THAT'S ALEC'S STORY!

ALEC HOLLAND... NOT ALEX OLSEN! AND IT DIDN'T HAPPEN AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY... IT HAPPENED DECADES LATER!

LOOK, WHAT IS THIS?

IT IS THE SECRET! THE SECRET YOU CAME TO LEARN!

ALEC HOLLAND WAS NOT THE FIRST THING TO WALK THE SWAMPS!

THERE WERE OTHERS BEFORE HIM.

BUT . THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE. EVEN ALLOWING FOR COINCIDENCE...

NO! NOT COINCIDENCE! DESIGN!

IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, THERE HAVE COME SOUR TIMES WHEN THE EARTH FEELS COMPELLED TO CREATE AN ELEMENTAL CHAMPION FOR ITSELF.

BUT ALEC'S TRANSFORMATION WAS AN ACCIDENT..

THERE ARE NO ACCIDENTS. SOUR TIMES ARE RETURNING TO YOUR WORLD, AND YOUR WORLD HAS AGAIN SHAPED A PROTECTOR TO STAND AGAINST THEM.

THAT IS WHAT YOU CAME TO LEARN!

NOW FORGIVE ME, BUT IF THE WARNING IS TO BE ANY USE TO YOU, WE MUST HURRY.

HURRY? BUT WHY? I DON'T UNDERSTAND...

MY BROTHER! IF I CAN SNEAK YOU OUT BEFORE HE THINKS TO CHECK ON OUR WHEREABOUTS, EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT...

LOOK, PLEASE, I REALLY CAN'T FOLLOW THIS. IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE...

IT'S MY FAULT. I'M SO BAD AT EXPLAINING THINGS...

JUST REMEMBER THE STORY OF ALEX OLSEN. TELL YOUR SWAMP THING THE TALE AS I TOLD IT TO YOU...

THEN, WHEN THE TROUBLE STARTS, IT WILL HELP HIM UNDERSTAND HIS PLACE IN THE SCHEME OF THINGS.

IT ISN'T MUCH, BUT IT'S THE BEST I CAN DO.

THROUGH HERE...

MY BROTHER'S PROBABLY BUSY FEEDING HIS GARGOYLES RIGHT NOW...

IF YOU GO ACROSS THE GROUNDS AND OUT THROUGH THE GATE, YOU'LL MAKE IT BACK TO WAKEFULNESS WITH THE SECRET INTACT AND READY TO PASS ON...

...BUT THEN IT WOULDN'T BE A SECRET, WOULD IT?

YOU KNOW THE RULES, BROTHER...

...AND NOW YOU MUST PAY THE FORFEIT.

BUT SHE MUST BE ALLOWED TO TAKE THE STORY WITH HER WHEN SHE LEAVES HER WORLD IS IN DANGER

IF SHE WANTED SOMETHING SHE COULD SHARE WITH *OTHERS*, SHE SHOULD HAVE CHOSEN A *MYSTERY*..

FOR *SECRETS* MUST BE KEPT *FOREVER* I *WARNED* HER

I I WON'T LET YOU *DO* THIS! IT'S JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE *JEALOUS*...

YOU'VE *ALWAYS* BEEN JEALOUS!

JEALOUS? OF *YOU?*

NO... I AM SIMPLY *DISGUSTED*. WE HAVE BEEN *CHARGED*, YOU AND I, WITH THE SAFEKEEPING OF THE *STORIES*. WHO *BETTER*? WE WERE IN THE *FIRST* STORY...

NOW *YOU* WOULD BETRAY THAT TRUST.

WHEN THE WOMAN LEAVES HERE SHE WILL FORGET YOUR LITTLE YARN. IT WILL REMAIN SAFE IN SOME BACKWATER OF HER MIND, IGNORED AS A SECRET *SHOULD* BE.

NO! I WON'T *LET* YOU!

SUAN!

GET OFF OF ME, YOU OBESE SLUG.

I'M *WARNING* YOU.

GET OFF BEFORE I.

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

CAIN! NO!

NOT AGAIN!

RUNCH

RUNCH RUNCH

YOU... YOU MURDERED HIM.

YOUR OWN BROTHER...

MURDER? DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT MURDER!

I INVENTED MURDER!

AS FOR THAT FAT OAF, DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM. HE'LL BE UP AND ABOUT TOMORROW, BUMBLING AROUND JUST AS GOOD AS NEW..

.. AT LEAST UNTIL THE *NEXT* TIME

IT'S ALL WE HAVE TO *DO* NOW THAT NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR THE *STORIES* ANYMORE

THE SAME ACT OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

IT'S OUR *PUNISHMENT*, FOR DOING IT THE *FIRST* TIME.

BUT WHY SHOULD YOU *BOTH* BE PUNISHED FOR SOMETHING THAT *YOU* DID? IT ISN'T *FAIR!*

OF COURSE IT'S FAIR! *I'M* BEING PUNISHED FOR BEING THE FIRST *PREDATOR*...

.. AND *HE'S* BEING PUNISHED FOR BEING THE FIRST *VICTIM*.

NOW.. I THINK IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO *LEAVE*

REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR *SECRET* WITH YOU TOO BAD THAT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO *SHARE* IT WITH ANYBODY

WAIT! DON'T *LEAVE* ME HERE!

HOW CAN I SEE WHERE I'M *GOING* IN THIS *FOG*?

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIND MY WAY.

HOME?

WRITE IT DOWN..

WRITE IT DOWN RIGHT AWAY

HOW DID IT START...?

"I CANNOT REMEMBER THE MORNING ANY."

BRRING BRRING

HELLO...? OH...HI, DEANNA AM I SUPPOSED TO BE AT WORK? ISN'T TODAY SATURDAY?

OH. WELL, I DON'T MIND COMING IF YOU'RE BUSY. NO, THAT'S NO PROBLEM

SEE YOU IN ABOUT AN HOUR SURE

'BYE.

"I CANNOT REMEMBER THE..."?

WHAT DID I WRITE THAT FOR?

OH, WELL, THAT'S LIFE ..

.. FULL OF LITTLE MYSTERIES

NEXT: RITE OF SPRING

SPECIAL POSTER GALLERY

SPECIAL POSTER GALLERY

SPECIAL POSTER GALLERY

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The "Rite of Spring," one of the strangest, yet most beautiful love stories you're ever likely to read, was scheduled to appear this issue, but will not grace these pages for another month. Why, you ask? Well, it basically goes like this. After the entire SWAMP THING creative team met together for the first time in New York this past August, one nameless frenetic-lined penciller got a little too caught up in the excitement of it all (what with Alan flying over from England) and fell a bit behind schedule. That's not to say that the Swampy trio didn't plot out the next year-and-a-half of stories—an odyssey taking the Swamp Thing through the dark underside of America, culminating in a spectacular fiftieth anniversary issue. They did, and just wait until you see what's planned! In the meantime Steve took a truly different, if not bizarre, storytelling approach to the "Rite of Spring," and it's all wrapped up in an exquisitely painted cover by John. We're really sorry for the delay, but we definitely feel it's worth the wait.

This month's "Abandoned Houses" is a tribute to DC's mystery books, and specifically in our case, THE HOUSE OF SECRETS—the spawning ground of the very first SWAMP THING story by Len and Berni, appearing again this issue. We're more than happy to include this all-time classic in our current continuity, and extra-special thanks to Ron Randall for doing a terrific job on the framing sequence. That's all for now, so let's get on to your letters—Karen

*****

Dear Alan, Stephen, John, and anyone who has anything to do with...

Issues 21 to 26 of the THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING. They are, simply, the best run of stories in a regular-line comic that I have ever read. In my thirteen years of collecting comics, the only things ever called comic books that I enjoyed more than these were the first five books of Frank Miller's RONIN. And if I had read those six issues of THE SWAMP THING on the same quality paper that RONIN is printed on, I might even change my mind about that.

When my fellow comic enthusiast, Stuart Alford, told me that issue #21 was maybe the best comic that he had ever read, I was skeptical. The SWAMP THING? Just another man-within-the-monster story. Long before my third straight reading of the story I realized how wrong I was. Alan Moore is one of the best things to ever happen to comics. He is a *writer*. Period. SWAMP THING has evolved from "comic" book to literature. But not only is it literature, it's also Art. Art, that somehow manages to match Moore's uncanny storytelling ability. Art, that so closely follows the nature of the stories' action and narration that it's...well, uncanny.

I have just finished page 4 of issue #26, "...A Time of Running..." and I am about to call Stuart and thank him. I have been buying the SWAMP THING ever since #21, the first one that I ever read. These six issues have brought me ridiculous amounts of pleasure. I only got to page 4 of this latest issue before quivering with anticipatory joy. I could not even wait until the end of this comic to write you and say, Thank You.

Besides, had I waited, all I would have been able to say is...uncanny.

David Quinter
Bard College
Annandale-on-Hudson
NY 12504

It's rare that three people's vision of a character is so alike, David, as in the case of Alan, Steve, and John. And it's that similarity of warped minds (just kidding, guys, honest) that I feel is responsible for the "method behind the madness" of this book.

*****

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Congratulations! I must say I am impressed. This is the first letter that I have ever written to a comic magazine and I feel you deserve all the praise that I can muster. This is not to say that your efforts haven't pleased me before, but the second installment of your Demon Trilogy just knocked me for a loop.

Everything, from the magnificent artwork to the beautifully poetic dialogue for Etrigan, just seemed to leap off the pages into reality for me. The combination of these two characters (Swamp Thing and the Demon) is a perfect blend of science and mysticism. Of course, Swamp Thing has had experiences with the occult before, but none, I believe, equal the current storyline. I wish there were more words that I could use to describe how this story effected me, but I suppose *beautiful, superlative, stunning,* and *excellently written* will have to do.

To me this is the epitome of what comics should be, and I hope that this issue will be an example of more to come. It's things like this issue that make all the waiting worthwhile. I could go on, but it would be redundant. All I can say is, congratulations again on an amazing piece of work.

R.J. Jennings
London, Ontario, Canada

Being the recipient of a reader's first letter ever sent to a comic is always something special for us, R.J. Thanks.

*****

Dear Swamp-folk,

The SAGA (and it truly is a saga) OF THE SWAMP THING continues to be one of the best-produced comics on the market, and remains at the top in the Gothic, horror, or whatever genre it is considered to be a part of.

The title is misleading, though. This book is not the saga of a swamp thing (although that is part of it), but it is more importantly the saga of those around him. It is the saga of Liz and Dennis; of Abby and Matt; of Paul (P-A-U-L); of Jason Woodrue; and the others.

Ever since facing the truths of his existence, and burying the "Alec" in him, Swamp Thing has been the eye of a storm raging around him. He is at peace, but Abby, Matt, Jason Woodrue, and P-A-U-L are experiencing the madness (bad craziness?) of their own existences. In evidence: In issue #26 Swamp Thing appeared in only about 34 of the approximate 131 panels in the story. Alan Moore has created a truly delightful maelstrom of the lives of these people around him.

And into these swirling storylines ventures the occasional "team-up."

Reader Tony Hartgrove writes asking for many more team-ups, giving a complete list of the ones he prefers, even wondering if Swamp Thing could meet with characters from other companies (from such thinking comes Superman-Spiderman books! Once considered impossible, but no more). Not wanting Tony Hartgrove to take offense, but I must heartily disagree.

Initially my response to *any* team-up with other DC characters would be nix, nill, nope. I have strongly felt that continuity with the rest of the DC "universe" should be of little importance when a comic of this quality has succeeded in creating its own universe.

Meetings with the Floronic Man and the Demon have changed my thinking somewhat (one could hardly call the appearance of the JLA a team-up, since all they did was sit by and watch). These characters "fit" into the direction of this

book and they have been handled superbly. But still, they are rare exceptions. I don't want to see everybody who wears colored tights running through this magazine. They don't belong. Other popular characters from the DC universe shouldn't appear in these pages more than once or twice a year (and less than that wouldn't upset me).

Well, thanks for loaning me the soap box, you can have it back now.

Donald G. Shelton
601 S. Central Av.
Nicholasville, KY 40356

Point well taken, Donald, but as they say in show biz, it's all in the plot and execution. We don't have many team-ups planned, but in the case of the annual, the story would've been a whole lot different if not for the inclusion of the guest-stars.

*****

Dear Karen and Company,

I am now doing something I have never done before. I have bought comics because I enjoyed the art. I have bought comics because I loved the character or the storyline. I have even bought some comics as an investment. But I have never bought a comic on the basis of the author's name. Until now.

A recent notice in WARRIOR magazine alerted me to the fact that Alan Moore had begun scripting SWAMP THING. I immediately bought the latest issue and the back-issues from #20. I haven't been disappointed. Alan Moore excels in two areas: his terse, poetic word-craft and his ability to breathe new life into stale (moldy?) characters. In short order he has re-interpreted the entire Swamp Thing saga, and yet has not violated any of the earlier issues. In the single opening page of #24 he has resurrected in me an awe which I haven't felt since I was a kid with a towel tied around my neck waiting for the mail carrier to bring me the latest creased copy of the JLA. And the Demon is finally being handled as if he were a demon indeed. Thanks for the wonder.

Keep the innovations coming. Give us more Moore!

Peace,
H. Michael Brewer
710 Western Reserve
Crescent Springs, KY 41017

As far as scheduled stories go, Alan has a back-up feature in OMEGA MEN #26 (May cover date) with art by Kevin O'Neill, and this year's SUPERMAN Annual (October cover date) with Dave Gibbons illustrating.
He's also written four GREEN LANTERN CORPs; two GREEN ARROWs, drawn by Klaus Janson; a two-part VIGILANTE; and a BATMAN guest-starring Clayface. As of this writing, none of the above is scheduled, but be sure to check for further announcements. And, oh, yes, Alan's currently hard at work on a DC PRESENTS team-up with Superman and some big green plant guy.

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Dear Ms. Berger:

SWAMP THING #26, if nothing else, kept up the book's reputation as the weirdest one in the DC Universe.

Alan Moore is trying to link the book up with the rest of the DC line just a little bit, as evidenced by the Justice League—Plant Master appearances; and now Jason Blood enters the picture. He belongs here, but he has been shuttled back and forth from characterization to characterization since his creation that I doubt if he can ever truly graduate beyond the land of never-will-be, no matter how well Stephen Bissette draws him (and, rest assured, he drew him viciously well; when he leaped thru the skylight on Page 21, I ducked!). I'll reserve further judgment until the story concludes. Here's hoping Alan Moore has heard of The Patchwork Man.

Charles D. Brown
39 Stockton St.
Brentwood, NY 11717

There's most definitely been talk about doing a Patchwork Man story, Charles. But at this point he doesn't fit right into our upcoming developments. That's not to say we've forgotten about him, though.

*****

Dear Karen:

Upon reading SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING issues #24, 25, 26, and 27, I have the feeling that you shall be, dare I say, "swamped" with fan mail. As I sit here writing this letter, I can imagine you in your office, dwarfed by towers of letters, *all* of them favorable. Therefore, I shall make my letter brief and to the point.

The scripting in the Demon Trilogy, particularly ish #26, is simply the best script I have seen in any comic book this year.

Never, but *never*, has the Demon appeared more demonlike, not even in DETECTIVE #482, which was drawn by Golden/Giordano. I was, and still am, awestruck.

For producing these great comics, I thank you.

Mike Souza
Route 2
Kenyon, RI 02836

*****

Dear Swampers:

That name "Jason Blood" was stuck in my mind after SWAMP THING #25, but I'm ashamed to admit that I still didn't recognize Etrigan even after I saw him on the cover of SWAMP THING #26. A better choice couldn't have been made for a guest star, except maybe Deadman, especially with the direction you've been taking Muckmouth. And I love how that Demon rhymes!

You're all doing an incredible job and I must say this whole Monkey King business has got me horrified. Page 18 with that gruesome figure saying, "Mommy needn't know," wiped me out. This is storytelling at its best. Whoever thought a mere comic book could be so powerful?

I'm intrigued by recent developments with Matt Cable, but he deserves a happy ending eventually.

My friend Matt Cable had better not wind up dead.

Alan Moore, you're being watched by the eyes of Ugly Ed!

I can't compare with the Demon, I know, but I'm serious about Matt, guys. He couldn't have died in that car. No way!

SWAMP THING may be the most sophisticated comic book around. Don't screw it up by introducing SWAMP SMURF!

Ugly Ed Sudlow
Fort Worth, TX

Matt's situation will be revealed next issue, Ed. And by the way, hope it's not too bold of me to ask, but are you really that ugly?

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Our space is up for now, people. So until next month, take care.—Karen